

DRAFT
14 Apr 77
M.S.

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The President's Concern for Intelligence Priorities

1. What follows is an effort to synthesize the discussion of the National Intelligence staff at its special staff meeting on 12 April.

2. The President's comment that the Key Intelligence Questions were not his questions was made without an understanding of the purposes and uses of the KIQs. Our purpose in addressing his concern over intelligence priorities is not to assure him that we are working on his questions (The IC Staff, on the other hand, is in the throes of preparing a paper for just that purpose, with the ultimate objective of forestalling the DCI from ordering a modification of the Intelligence Community Planning System that the IC Staff has proposed. The DDI is, in addition, pulling together an intelligence issues paper for its own production guidance). Our purpose, rather, is to use the occasion to acquire Presidential guidance about what we should be producing, to enhance his interest in reading our product, and to gain the added clout for our efforts that an expression of Presidential interest would bestow.

3. In pursuit of our purposes, a number of relevant considerations apply:

a. Sensitive to charges over the past several years that our product has occasionally been irrelevant to the concerns of policymakers, we have been hesitant to commission work for which we have been unable to generate a specific expression of interest. Such requests, it must be noted, are helpful under present organizational arrangements in winning the agreement of Intelligence Community production offices to undertake the projects we suggest.

b. Seeking to assure the relevance of the Intelligence Community's production, we have sought particularly to participate in the process of responding to NSSMs and PRMs. We have, however, discovered that the PRM process does not lend itself to the Intelligence Community's making a contribution. The drafters of PRMs do not welcome necessarily--may, even resist--our participation; the deadlines are too short to allow contributions that are much more than summations of extant products; and such contributions that can be made are often blended into the PRM responses by policy officers in a way that threatens the integrity of our Intelligence Community judgments.

c. The best contribution intelligence can make to the policymaking process is to provide estimates of the reactions of foreign states to the US policy options under consideration. The problem here is that the serious options are seldom selected by the policymakers much before the event. Policymakers are sometimes reluctant to share these options with the Intelligence Community which, in any case, has precious little time to comment. This sort of intelligence, moreover, inherently engenders enmity from its consumers; even the terms of reference are necessarily phrased in terms that appear to challenge the policy options being considered.

d. When policymakers do ask the Intelligence Community for analytical products, they often do not understand the limits of what the Community can, or properly should, do. In the process of educating the policymaker on these points, the Intelligence Community can be adjudged unresponsive or misdirected.

4. These considerations suggest that the National Intelligence staff has essentially assumed a posture of reacting to the current concerns of policymakers, of spending too much time making contributions that may not be all that useful, and of not taking the initiative to anticipate policymakers' needs to the extent desirable. Our objective thus should be to use Admiral Turner's discussion with the President

on priorities to gain Presidential sanction for the anticipatory estimative intelligence that is the most valuable contribution the Intelligence Community can make to the policymaking process.

5. What does Admiral Turner take to the President that might offer some promise of allowing the Admiral to accomplish our objective? The Admiral does not take:

a. A list of broadly put questions which, even if the President indicates interest in some of the questions, leaves us uninformed as to which facets of the questions we should be addressing.

b. A list of narrowly focused questions on which the President can simply tic off yes or no, leaving us in our same reactive stance.

6. The Admiral, instead, takes to the President a paper which stimulates a discussion in which:

a. the Admiral is able to tell the President what the Intelligence Community proposes to write for him; and

b. the President is able to convey where we are properly out in front along the trend lines of his policy directions and where we are, instead, off on tangents that are irrelevant.

7. This paper the Admiral would use could be:

a. A list of foreign policy issues and of the contributions intelligence might make on each.

b. A list of foreign policy issues that are being decided today on tactical grounds and of the intelligence projections we intend to write that will illuminate the longer-term implications of the decisions being made.

c. A list of foreign policy issues on which we can contribute usefully by making short- or mid-term estimates of foreign attitudes, plus a list of problems that the US can do little about and that little engaged US national security interests, but which do over the longer term promise a substantial change in the international environment and perspective in which US interests are perceived.

d. A partial list of the national intelligence projections we intend to make in the year ahead, each explained in terms of the US national security issue involved, its relevance to policy trends the President is pursuing, and what particular insights or assets the Intelligence Community can bring to bear.